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ABSTRACT

This guide, presented in four chapters, provides activities to train teachers to set up a multicultural classroom. In Section I the activity acquaints the participant with six types of classroom areas: private area, individual free-work area with seating, learning center with surfaces for sitting work, learning centers without surfaces for sitting work, general classroom activity area, and large-group free area. Detailed characteristics of these areas are provided. A classroom is observed and evaluated on the basis of whether it has at least one of the primary areas. Recommendations for changes are listed. The activity in Section II acquaints the participant more thoroughly with the characteristics of learning centers. Centers in classrooms are evaluated on the basis of 12 variables: working facilities, size, physical boundaries, visual boundaries, isolation from through traffic, where materials are stored, how materials are stored, visual evidence of materials, physical availability of materials, function of center, relation of materials to function, and evidence of child products. Activities in Section III involve imaginary case studies. Each case study presents a statement by the fictitious teachers that describes the activity they want to set up, an illustration of what was done, a list of questions for the participant, and answers to the questions. The final section focuses on planning for change in the classroom environment. Evaluation forms for activities are included. (KC)

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SETTING UP THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

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from the unit "Arranging the Classroom for Children"
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SETTING UP THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER 1

SIX CLASSROOM AREAS

Introduction

There are many types of classroom areas and many ways to describe and define these areas. The first chapter of this learning unit introduces you to six basic types of classroom areas. We will refer to these as the six primary classroom areas. In the process of acquainting you with these six areas, we will also introduce you to a way of describing areas in terms of their characteristics rather than in terms of the type of curricular activity that the areas may serve or the materials that are used in the areas.

If you are familiar with preschool education, you are probably already used to thinking of different classroom areas. For some time, preschool and kindergarten classrooms have been arranged with a variety of activity areas. Most often these areas are described in terms of what children do in the area or the materials that are used in the areas. For example, you may have heard of "block areas," "housekeeping areas," "reading areas," and so on. Today the trend in arranging the classroom into learning areas, activity centers, resource areas, and so forth has extended to the early elementary school years as well. This is especially true of those classrooms where the teacher is trying to teach in an individualized and personalized way. More and more elementary classrooms are beginning to be organized in terms of curriculum areas such as science areas, mathematics areas, art areas, and writing centers.

Defining or describing areas in terms of the curricular activities (for example, "reading areas") or the materials (for example, "block area") is a limited approach because it does not answer the questions about how the areas are or should be organized and arranged. Of course, it may be feasible to take all the possible types of activity areas (such as reading, science, mathematics,

blocks, etc.) and define the best way of organizing each of them. But since there are as many possible areas as there are activities and materials, this approach could be very time-consuming (especially if you're dealing with classrooms for children ranging from three to eight years of age).

The approach we will take is to talk about areas in terms of their characterisitcs. For example, we will talk about areas in terms of their size, whether materials are stored in the area, how materials are stored there, the type of working facilities in the area, whether the area is used for one or many types of activities, and so on. As you will see, this approach will be much more useful than simply talking about what children study or play at in areas or what materials are used. By describing areas in terms of their characteristics, we will be able to match areas to activities and organize areas so that they support the way we want activities to be carried out. In this way we can achieve a balance that should make your job easier and the children's learning and playing experiences more positive ones.

Before going on in the unit, you should complete ACTIVITY I. This activity and its FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION are designed to acquaint you with the six primary areas and some of the characteristics of areas in general. It will take at least one hour of classroom observation to complete the activity. Before you actually go to a classroom to complete ACTIVITY I, you should make sure that you understand what you are to do and how you will do it. Below we have presented an overview of the activity and instructions for its completion. Read these carefully and then complete the activity.

Overview of Activity I

ACTIVITY I has two parts. First, you will take an observation form (FORM A) and evaluate a classroom (for children three to eight years of

age). You will evaluate the classroom on the basis of whether or not it has at least one of each of the six primary areas. Secondly, if you find that the classroom you are observing does not have at least one of each of the six primary areas, then you should do Part 2 of the activity. This involves deciding what changes would have to be made in the classroom in order that it would have at least one of each of the six primary areas.

You can observe any classroom that is set up to serve children between the ages of three and eight years of age. If you already are working in a primary classroom, preschool site, or day-care center, then observe your own classroom. If you do not work in a classroom, you should make arrangements so that you can go to a room and observe. It is not necessary that you visit the classroom while it is in operation, nor is it necessary that children and adults be in the room while you are observing.

Keep in mind that this first activity is not designed for you to evaluate a classroom to determine whether it is well arranged or poorly arranged. We are interested only in acquainting you with the six types of classroom areas and some characteristics of these areas. The classroom you observe may have none or only some of the six primary areas and yet still be a classroom that is well suited to the activities it is designed to support. To repeat, ACTIVITY I is supposed to help you learn the critical characteristics of the six primary areas. When you know these, we will be able to discuss how a classroom may vary from the recommended six areas and yet still be a well-arranged environment.

Instructions for Activity I

Part 1.

Once you have found a classroom that you can observe, you are ready

to begin ACTIVITY I. First, acquaint yourself with FORM A (page 9). You will use this form for making your actual classroom observation and evaluation. So make sure that you are familiar with and clear about all the information on FORM A. Basically, FORM A lists six types of classroom areas and gives a brief description of each.

Using FORM A is fairly simple. Look around in the classroom. For each of the six primary areas, determine whether the classroom has at least one of each area type. Do not count an area as one of the six primary areas unless you are sure that the area matches all parts of the description on FORM A. Count each area in the classroom as only one of the six primary areas. If a classroom area seems as if it could be considered as more than one of the six primary areas, pick the one that it is most like.

Part 2.

Once you have determined whether or not the classroom you have observed has at least one of each of the six primary areas, you are ready for the second part of ACTIVITY I. If you found all six of the primary areas in the classroom, you're finished with ACTIVITY I and should read the FOLLOW-UP section for ACTIVITY I starting on page 13.

If you did not find all of the six primary areas, you are now asked to determine what changes would have to be made in order for there to be at least one of each of the six primary areas in the classroom. Use FORM B for this purpose (page 11).

a. If there is no area in the classroom that comes even close to the description of one of the six primary areas, then indicate on FORM B that you would change the classroom by including the

missing area. Describe what this area would look like if you were to count it as one of the six primary areas. For example, if you found nothing that looked like a PRIVATE AREA, then indicate that you would include a private area in the classroom and describe what it would look like.

b. If there is an area in the classroom that is close to the description of an area on FORM A, but not close enough to be counted as one of the six primary areas, then indicate how you would change the area so that you could count it as one of the areas on FORM A. For example, if there is a LEARNING CENTER in the classroom but it is large enough for 10 children to work there, then you would suggest on FORM B that the area be changed so that no more than six children could work there. (Look at the description of a LEARNING CENTER on FORM A to see why this change would be suggested.)

After you have prescribed the changes you'd make for the observed classroom so that it would have at least one of each of the six primary areas, finish your work with Chapter 1 by reading the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY I.

Name:_____

FORM A — Presence of Six Primary Areas

(For use in classroom observation. See instructions on page 6.)

DESCRIPTION OF SIX PRIMARY AREAS	Put a check (✓) in the box for each area if the area is present in the classroom.
PRIVATE AREA: A small enclosed area only big enough for 1-2 children. No materials are normally stored in the area and there is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity. There are no chairs and tables in the private area.	☐
INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING: A working area such as a desk and chair. The area is only big enough for 1-2 children. There is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity or for any one particular child.	☐
LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially closed area with surfaces for seating work such as tables and chairs. The area is big enough for at least 3 but no more than 6 children. The area is set up for some specific types of activities and child-accessible materials that are used in the activity are stored in the area.	☐
LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially enclosed area with space for children to work while standing up or sitting on the floor. The area is big enough for 3 but no more than 6 children and is set up for some specific types of activities. Child-accessible materials used in the activities are stored in the area.	☐
GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA: This is an area with working surfaces such as tables where at least 5 but no more than 12 children can work together. The kinds of activities and materials used in this area could easily change from day to day.	☐
LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA: This is a large group area where all or most of the class could meet at the same time. Basically it is a large open area in the classroom. There are no or few tables and chairs occupying the area.	☐

Name: _____

FORM B — Recommended Change for Classroom Observed in Activity I

(Use FORM B after completing FORM A. See instructions on page 6.)

For each of the six areas not completely present in the observed classroom, indicate what changes would have to be made in the room in order for the area to be present. For example, if there is no PRIVATE AREA, describe the changes you'd make so that there would be at least one PRIVATE AREA in the classroom.

PRIVATE AREA

INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING

LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

GENERAL CLASSPOOM ACTIVITY AREA

LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity I

Responsive Education

The six areas that you have just finished observing are an ideal set of areas. To determine whether they would be appropriate for a particular classroom requires looking at how you want the classroom to function or operate. One model for running a classroom is to keep children quietly sitting at desks and doing work that the teacher assigns. The work may require a limited amount of resources such as workbooks. Maybe in this kind of situation children would be expected to stay seated and not talk to each other except at prescribed times. The six primary areas are not really needed for this type of education. However, this kind of educational setting for young children is both very impractical and, in our minds, undesirable.

We feel that an ideal situation is one where the classroom, with its resources, organization and routines, responds to the child. We have called this approach "Responsive Education" and have developed a Responsive Educational Program for early childhood education. Basically, the responsive educational approach says that the schooling environment must support the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth and that, in order to do so, it must also provide the child with choices and freedom. Children, we believe, can be helped to become responsible for their own learning and growth if they are also helped to take on responsibility for decisions about what they will work on, how long they will work on it, whom they will work with, what they will work with, where they will work, and for what purpose. If the schooling environment can help children make these decisions, then it is "responding" to children. Today there are many similar approaches to education. "Open," "individualized," and "personalized" education are some of the more familiar labels.

Of course, though this form of education may sound ideal, you may realize that it is difficult to achieve. There must be a balance between what the educational community expects of the child and what the child expects of himself. Likewise, there must be a balance between your own expectations, abilities, and tolerances and the expectations and demands made by the children. But Responsive Education can be achieved and it can yield exciting results. We have seen evidence of it in hundreds of classrooms.

This brief description of Responsive Education may have raised many questions in your mind, some of which may be answered by other learning units. For the moment, however, we will leave the specifics of Responsive Education and focus instead on the general implications that this form of education has for the arrangement of the classroom environment.

Characteristics of Classroom Areas

If you were operating an open-education or responsive classroom, different children would be pursuing different activities at the same time. Also, whether doing the same basic thing or not, children may be using different materials, working in different places, and interacting in different social groupings. Children might work by themselves or with a small or large group of children or with an adult. Likewise, children may be working in a variety of situations: while standing up, sitting, lying down, and so on. Added to these "what, with what, where, with whom, and how" issues, we need to consider the timing of activities and how resources are distributed and retrieved. In a responsive classroom, children make their own decisions (within limits) about joining or leaving activities. They also make decisions about the pacing of an activity; half an hour of block play today, none tomorrow, and an hour next day. Also, children select the materials they need for their own

activities.

From looking at what children are doing and how they are pursuing their activities, we can derive a number of activity characteristics that relate to characteristics of areas. Without talking any further about activities, let's consider five issues that lead to describing characteristics of areas.

1. SIZE:

Size is one issue that characterizes areas. The size of an area will influence how the area functions. Some activities need more room than others, and larger groups of people working together require more room. Areas can vary in their size.

2. FUNCTION:

An area can be set up for a specific function or purpose or it may be set up for many purposes. For example, the kitchen is generally specifically set up for the preparation of food, even though other activities may go on there as well. The living room, on the other hand, may be set up for many functions: television viewing, entertaining, studying, and possibly even housing for overnight guests. So areas can vary in the degree to which they are designed to serve specific purposes. The ways that they vary thus partially characterize the areas.

3. BOUNDARIES:

An area can vary in how it is physically defined. Some areas are defined by physical boundaries. The room itself is an example. Even areas within rooms can be defined by physical boundaries. A play house in a classroom might serve as an example. Some areas may have no physical boundaries, but through habit, storage of materials,

seating facilities, etc., there is an understanding that it is an area. For example, a desk in the corner of the room may be considered as an area even though there are no walls around it.

4. MATERIALS:

An area can also vary in its relationship to the storage of materials. An area may contain materials and resources that are used there (as in the kitchen), or it may contain materials that are used somewhere else (for example, a supply room), or it may not have materials stored in it, in which case materials may be brought to the area. A large empty table in the classroom may be a place where materials are brought to be worked with.

5. WORKING FACILITIES:

Classroom areas are places where people go and do something and they can vary in terms of the kind of facilities they have to support what is done there. An area may have tables or desks with chairs, counters or tables to stand and work at, open floor space for sitting or lying down, comfortable cushions for lounging and relaxing, etc. In our daily lives, we're really very familiar with this notion. Consider barber chairs, work benches, easy chairs, beds, big tables, little tables, desks, couches, and so on.

These five issues (SIZE, FUNCTION, BOUNDARIES, MATERIALS, and WORKING FACILITIES) might be better called variables because any area can vary in how it relates to the five issues. For example, size is a variable because areas vary in their size. When you describe an area in terms of these variables, you have also defined the characteristics of the area.

By looking at these variables and considering the types of areas that would support Responsive Education, we arrived at the six primary areas. FORM A lists these areas and their characteristics. On the following pages, we have provided a more detailed description of these areas and their relationship to characteristics of activities and needs that occur in the classroom. For convenience, we have labeled these six areas as "Types A, B, ...F."

Rationale for and Description of Six Recommended Areas for a Responsive Classroom

Type A Area... "PRIVATE AREA"

What does a Type A area look like? -- A brief description

This is a small area just big enough for one or two children to go to be away from the ongoing activities of the class. The area is small and affords physical and visual isolation. There is no specific function (i.e., something the occupants should do) associated with the area and it does not contain working surfaces for sitting work. Further, materials are not stored in area.

Aside from the physical characteristics of the area, it is obvious that the area will not serve its purpose unless the teacher uses the area in its intended manner and establishes limits to assure such usage. That is, the teacher should not use it as a place to hold "problem children," or as a punishment area. Likewise, if the area is to serve as a refuge from the rest of the room, there need to be some rules or limits, such as: "Children in the private area are not to be disturbed." This rule might well apply to the teacher as well as to the children.

What is the reason for having a PRIVATE AREA in the classroom?

A classroom is a "foreign" environment for young children. This is as true for the young child as for a child of any age who is new to the particular classroom or its occupants. No matter how much energy a teacher uses to make the classroom warm and comfortable, it remains an institutional setting. As such, it is not similar to the familiar environment of the child's non-school life. Thus, it is desirable to provide children with a half-way area, a transitional area where they

can be physically within the classroom yet separated from its ongoing activities and functions. The private area is designed to serve this end. It provides a place where the child can "drop out" when psychological or social demands of the classroom become too great, or when privacy is desired.

What purpose does a Type A area serve?

A PRIVATE AREA can meet the needs of children who want to be alone for some of the following reasons:

- A child has suffered a mild emotional trauma, possibly arising from a confrontation with somebody or frustration from a difficult problem, and does not want to be left in the spotlight of other children's gazes or to cope with others' attempts to make him feel better.

- A child wants to be with a friend in a situation where they will not be disturbed by other children.

- A child wants to escape from the main activities of the classroom because it has become difficult for him to focus his attention.

- A child is beginning to explore a new problem and wants privacy so that others will not see his first groping mistakes or because he needs the privacy to concentrate.

Type B Area ... "INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING"

What does a Type B area look like? -- A brief description

The INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING is a fairly permanent working surface for sitting work that is large enough to accommodate comfortably one or two children. It is a "free area" that can be used by one or two children to pursue a number of types of activities. Since there is no specific function associated with this type of area, materials are generally not stored there. If they are, they are usable for a variety of functions and not restricted to specific functions. For example, the area may have paper and pencils as opposed to a range of materials used specifically for curricular activities like block play and mathematics. There may be one or many Type B areas, depending upon the size of the room, the number and age of the children, and the types of activities going on in the classroom. An individual desk is one example of a Type B area.

What is the reason for having a Type B area in the classroom?

Children should not always be expected to work with small or large groups of other children. There are many occasions when a child might want to work by himself or with one other child. The classroom should provide free areas (those which are not the property of any one child) where a child can pursue any activity requiring a working surface for sitting work.

What purpose does a Type B area serve?

A Type B area can be expected to meet your needs and those of the children when the classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities are ones that do not occur daily, or they are activities that you want only one or two children to be working on together.

- The activities are ones that do not require a variety of materials, or they are ones for which the appropriate materials can be easily transported to the area.

- The activities require a working surface for sitting work.

Type C Area ..."LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK"

What does a Type C area look like? -- A brief description

A Learning Center With Surfaces For Sitting Work is a partially enclosed area where a small group of children (between three and six) could sit at working surfaces and work on similar activities. The Type C area is set up, on a fairly permanent basis, to serve a specific set of activities. It is also an area where materials are used by the child and stored in such a way that children have free access to them. A Type C area has working surfaces for sitting work, such as tables and chairs, counters and benches, etc. There may be one or many such areas in a classroom, depending on the size of the room, the number and age of the children, and the types of activities in which the children regularly engage. A "manupulative math center" is an example of a Type C area.

What is the reason for having a Type C area in the classroom?

Responsive education is concerned with small-group learning activities and with providing an environment that can facilitate such activities. Children working together gain a variety of perspectives plus the possibility of wider insights and feedback from others. There is the opportunity for children to use each other as resources.

A Type C area allows you to set up a fairly permanent area for specific activities. This means that you can store materials in the same area where they will be used. Setting up a learning center also means that children know where to go to pursue certain activities; thus, they become more self-directing in their learning.

What purpose does a Type C area serve?

A Type C area can be expected to meet your needs when classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities are ones that some children can be expected to engage in every day.
- At any one time, you want only a small group to be mutually engaged in the activity.
- The activities are such that the children can be expected to use a variety of resources or materials that are freely available to them.
- The activities are ones that require stable working surfaces at which the children can sit.

Type D Area ---"LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK"

What does a Type D area look like? -- A brief description

A Type D area is basically the same as a Type C area except that it does not have working surfaces such as tables, etc., at which children are expected to sit while working -- although some such surfaces may be present. That is, the Type D area is a fairly permanent area (in existence for at least three weeks); it is set up for specific activities; child-accessible materials used in the activities are stored in the area; it is an area that can comfortably hold a small group of children (between three and six); and the activities are such that children can be expected to work standing up or on the floor. As with the Type C area, there may be one or many Type D areas within a classroom. A "reading center" is an example of a Type D area.

What purpose does a Type D area serve?

A Type D area serves the same functions as a Type C area. The only difference involves the kind of working arrangement required by the activities. In Type D areas, children are expected to pursue activities that are physically less restrictive than those where children would be sitting at a working surface.

Type E Area ..."GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA"

What does a Type E area look like? -- A brief description

A GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA is an area where a medium-sized group of children (between five and twelve) could work at a variety of activities that require a working surface for either standing or sitting work. It does not have a specific purpose and the materials used by the children are generally brought to the area by the children or teacher. Because of the size of the area, there is generally only one Type E area for a classroom serving 20 children. An example might be a couple of large tables with chairs located centrally in the room.

What is the reason for having a Type E area in the classroom?

This area provides the classroom with the possibility of meeting the needs for a small or large group of children who are involved in activities not specifically related to other classroom areas. In Responsive Education, many needs are not constant enough to require a permanent area, but they do occur and need to be met. This area serves that purpose.

What purpose does a Type E area serve?

A Type E area can meet your needs when you want classroom activities with the following characteristics:

- A medium-sized group of children working together at an activity that a learning center (Type C) has not been set up for.
- A number of activities that might not disturb each other going on at the same time in the same area.

- The materials used by the children can conveniently be brought to the area by the children or by you.

- The activities require off-the-floor working surfaces at which children can sit or stand.

Type F Area ..."LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA"

What does a Type F area look like? -- A brief description

The LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA is an area where most or all of the class can meet at the same time. Basically it is a large area, free of obstructing furniture, or with furniture that can easily be moved so that a large group of children could occupy the area by sitting on the floor. The area is not arranged for specific activities but can accommodate a wide range of activities that require a larger space. Materials used in the area are brought to it. There is only one such area in a classroom for 20 children. A large carpeted area free of furniture would be an example.

What is the reason for having a Type F area in the classroom?

A large-group area where most of the class can be gathered at the same time can serve many needs for both the teacher and the children. For example, many teachers like to start the day with a large-group meeting in which concerns and interests are discussed, roll-call is taken, assignments are made, etc. There are also times during the day when a large space can serve a few children who are engaged in an activity requiring a large space.

What purpose does a Type F area serve?

A Type F area can be expected to meet your needs when classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities require a large amount of space or you want most

of the class to meet at the same time.

- The activities do not require working surfaces for sitting work or such surfaces can easily be brought to the area.
- The materials used in the activities can easily be brought to the area.

Number of Each of the Six Primary Areas Recommended for Your Classroom

Before leaving Chapter 1, we should consider how many of each of the six primary areas we would recommend for your classroom. There are no hard and fast rules in this matter. The closest thing to a principle is our belief that there should be about a third more working spaces than there are children. If you had only as many working spaces as children, then each child would have little freedom as to where he wanted to work; that is, he'd have to wait for someone else to move before he could change his location.

The following is a rough statement of what we would consider as the minimum number of areas for a classroom set up for 20 five-to-six-year-old children:

1 PRIVATE AREA (Type A)

2 INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREAS (Type B)

2 LEARNING CENTERS WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK (Type C)

2 LEARNING CENTERS WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK (Type D)

1 GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA (Type E)

1 LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA (Type F)

Of course, if the classroom had fewer or more than 20 children, these figures would change. The age of the children also plays a role. Younger children do not work as well in large groups and fewer of their activities require the use of tables and chairs. Younger children spend more time in play activity that is better carried out without desks, etc.

In Table 1 (page 31) we have provided some rough figures for each of the six primary area types. To use Table 1, use the average age of the children in the classroom to select one of the three rows for the area in question.

Go across this row until you come to the column for the number of children in your classroom. The figure in that square stands for the minimum number of that type of area that we would recommend for your classroom.

For example, looking at Table 1 you can see that if you had a classroom with 32 first graders (six years of age), you should have a minimum of 2 Private Areas, 3 Individual Areas, 3 Learning Centers with seating, 3 without, 2 General Activity Areas, 2 Large Group Areas.

TABLE 1

Minimum number of each of the six primary areas recommended for different-size classrooms for different-aged children.

Type A Area...PRIVATE AREA.

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2

Type B Area...INDIVIDUAL FREE WORK AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	3	4	4
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6

Type C Area...LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	0	1	1	2	3	3	4	5
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6

Type D Area...LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5

Type E Area...GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3

Type F Area...LARGE GROUP FREE AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3

CHAPTER 2

LEARNING CENTERS

Introduction

This second chapter of the unit is really a continuation of the first. In Chapter 1, we discussed six types of classroom areas that we called "the six primary areas." Two of the areas discussed (Types C and D) were called "Learning Centers." The Type C Learning Center was characterized as having working surfaces, such as tables, for sitting work and the Type D Learning Center was characterized as an area where activities could be carried out in a number of ways, such as standing, sitting on the floor, or lounging in comfortable chairs. In this chapter we will look more closely at the characteristics of these two types of learning centers and some of the functions they can serve in the classroom.

Almost all of the classroom centers talked about in early childhood education are examples of our Type C and D Learning Centers. Centers such as the homemaking center, the art area, the reading center, the block-play area, etc. are typically arranged so that the children are free to work in many ways. They may be standing at art easels, playing with blocks on the floor, comfortably reading or being read to while relaxing on cushions, and so on. Because the children are not restricted to working while sitting at tables or similar working surfaces, we call these areas "Learning Centers Without Surfaces for Sitting Work" or Type D areas.

Math centers, writing centers, science centers, etc., are another set of classroom areas typically talked about by early childhood educators. Often these areas are arranged so that children can pursue their work while sitting and working at writing surfaces. We call these areas "Learning Centers with Surfaces for Sitting Work" or Type C areas.

Before going on in the unit, you should complete ACTIVITY II. This activity and its FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION are designed to acquaint you more thoroughly with the characteristics of the two types of learning centers. This activity should require no more than an hour of your time to complete. Before you begin ACTIVITY II, read through the OVERVIEW and the INSTRUCTIONS for the activity. After you have completed ACTIVITY II, read through the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY II which will bring you to the end of Chapter 2.

Overview of Activity II

As in the first chapter, this chapter is also structured around a classroom observation activity. In ACTIVITY I you looked at a classroom to determine whether each of the six primary areas was present. In Activity II. you will look more closely at learning centers.

ACTIVITY II consists of two parts that are very similar to the two parts in ACTIVITY I. First, you will take an evaluation instrument (FORM C, and Form D) into a classroom and evaluate one area that you regard as a learning center. In the second part of the activity, you are asked to recommend, on Form C & FORM D, how the learning center would have to be changed in order for it to receive a high score. Of course, if the learning center you evaluate already has a high score, then you do not need to do the second part of ACTIVITY II.

If possible, you should carry out ACTIVITY II in the same classroom you observed for ACTIVITY I. If this is not possible, choose another classroom for three- to eight-year-old children Again, you do not have to visit the classroom while it is in operation, nor is it necessary that children or

adults be in the room while you are observing.

You will notice that five of the questions on FORM C correspond to the five issues we discussed in Chapter 1. They are questions about the size, function, boundaries, etc., of the area you are evaluating. After reading Chapter 2, you should be familiar with these characteristics. There are seven additional characteristics that we are using to define learning centes. ACTIVITY II will be your first introduction to these seven characteristics. As you go through Chapter 2, you will learn more about them and their relationship to the functioning of the classroom.

Instructions for Activity II

Part 1.

Once you have found a classroom you can observe, you are ready to begin ACTIVITY II. First, acquaint yourself with FORM C and D. You will use these forms to evaluate the classrooms.

Using FORM C is fairly simple. You just have to choose an area to evaluate and then answer each of the 12 questions on FORM C with a "YES" or "NO" answer. When you have done that, you can give the learning center a score by adding up the numbers that correspond to your "YES" and "NO" answers. If there are many learning centers in the classroom, it is suggested that you pick the one that will receive the highest score on FORM C. For example, if the classroom has an art center and a block corner, pick the one that would have the most "YES" answers to the 12 questions. Repeat this process with Form D.

"YES" answers to the 12 questions are given either 1 or 2 points depending upon the importance of the issue to the general functioning of a learning center. In the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY II, we will discuss the characteristics in more depth.

Part 2.

After you have answered the questions for the center, you will need to determine whether you should do Part 2 of the activity. Base your decision on the total score on FORM C/D. If the center received a score of 16 or less on Form C and 18 or less on Form D, then do Part 2 of the activity by using FORM E (page35). If the score on FORM C is higher than 16 points, go on to the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION.

If you are doing Part 2, you need to determine what changes would have to be made in the room to have a learning center that scores higher than 16 points.

a. If there is no area in the room that even comes close to being a learning center, then indicate on FORM D that you would change the classroom by including a learning center. Describe what the area would be used for and what it would look like.

b. If there is a learning center in the room, but it scored fewer than 16 points, describe on FORM D how you would change the center so that it would score more than 16 points.

Name: _____

FORM C — Evaluation of a Learning Center

(For use in classroom observation. See instructions on page 35.)

If there is a learning center in the classroom, briefly describe it in the box below:

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR THE LEARNING CENTER DESCRIBED ABOVE BY CIRCLING THE NUMERAL IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally enclosed by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES.)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children in the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

TO SCORE, SUM UP THE CIRCLED VALUES | |

FORM D - Evaluation of Multicultural Elements

		YES	NO
6 a.	Are there materials which represent different cultures?		
	Asian	2	0
	Black	2	0
	Native American	2	0
	Spanish - speaking	2	0
	Others (indicate)	2	0
8 a.	Are there displays which represent different cultures?		
	Asian	2	0
	Black	2	0
	Native American	2	0
	Spanish-speaking	2	0
	Others (indicate)	2	0
12a.	Are there child products related to different cultures?		
	Asian	2	0
	Black	2	0
	Native American	2	0
	Spanish-speaking	2	0
	Others (indicate)	2	0

To score, sum up the circled values

Name: _____

FORM E - Recommended Changes for Learning Center

Evaluated in Activity II

(for use after completing FORM C and D.

If there are no learning centers in the classroom, or if the learning center scored fewer than 16 points for FORM C, Part A & 18 points for FORM D, describe what changes would have to be made in the room in order for there to be at least one learning center that scores more than the desired number of points.

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity II

Description and Rationale for the 12 Area Variables

At this point, it might be helpful if you return to our discussion of learning centers in Chapter 1. On pages 22-24 we gave a brief description of two types of learning centers, the reasons for having learning centers, and the kind of purpose or needs learning centers can serve.

As you will recall from our discussion in Chapter 1, we used five variables to characterize all classroom areas. These were: SIZE, FUNCTION, BOUNDARIES, MATERIALS, and WORKING FACILITIES. In this chapter, we have added to the list so that we now have 12 variables, most of which are an elaboration on the five previous ones.

From the basic variable of whether or not an area has materials stored in it, we have derived four additional variables: whether the materials are related to the purpose of the area; whether the materials are stored so that children can easily return them to their proper place; whether the materials are visually evident to the children; and whether the materials are physically available to the children.

From the basic question on the boundaries of an area, we have derived an additional two variables that can be used to describe an area: whether the boundaries provide visual privacy for children in the area; and whether the barriers eliminate traffic paths through the area.

One last issue, not discussed earlier, concerns whether or not an area displays products produced by the children working in the area.

The five original variables from Chapter 1, plus the four additional materials variables, plus the two additional boundaries variables, and the issue about products, give us a total of 12 variables. These are the ones

you used on FORM C to evaluate the area you observed. You may still be a little uncertain about how to judge an area in terms of these 12 variables, or exactly what we mean by them, or why we think they are important. In the following pages, we have provided a more detailed description of each variable and the reasons why we think each is important to the smooth functioning of a learning center.

1. WORKING FACILITIES: Does the area have working surfaces for sitting work?

This question asks whether there are surfaces such as tables or counters at which children could sit and carry out their assignments or intentions.

This is an important question. But whether the answer should be "yes" or "no" depends upon what you expect children to do in the area. If the learning center is set up for activities that require a smooth and stable working surface, then the answer should be "yes."

2. SIZE: What is the total number of children comfortably accommodated by the area?

This question asks what total number of children could occupy a particular area at the same time and still function in terms of the purpose for which the area is being used.

We feel that the number of children in an area is an important issue. In general, if a learning center is so small that only one or two children can occupy it at the same time, then too few children have access to the materials in the area or to the space itself. More than six children in the area would create interferences.

Another important point that relates to size concerns how you work with the children. If more than six children are in an area, it becomes harder for you to individualize your attention. On the other hand, if you are always dealing with only one or two children, you will not be able to give attention to as many children as you would with the same amount of time devoted to larger groups.

3. BOUNDARIES: Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?

This question refers to the manner in which an area is defined as being distinct from other areas in the room. Physical boundaries are those that cannot be walked through (e.g., room dividers, partitions, bookcases, etc.).

This issue is important because physical boundaries can help define the area, cut down on interference from other activities in the room, reduce noise, and give occupants a sense of some privacy in their work or play. Thus, learning centers should be at least partially defined by physical boundaries.

4. BOUNDARIES: Is the area isolated from visual contact?

This question refers to the possibility that the majority of children occupying the area could, if sitting on the floor, avoid visual contact with other areas. Most areas partially or totally defined by physical boundaries would meet this definition if the boundaries were solid.

This issue is important for the same reasons boundaries themselves are important. They reduce distraction between

activities and provide a sense of privacy.

5. BOUNDARIES: Is the area isolated from through traffic?

"Through traffic" means that there is a possibility of finding a path that leads from one area to another by going through the area. If such a possibility exists, the area is not isolated from through traffic. A tolerable exception may be a path going through an area but not in such a way that it would disturb the occupants.

Whether or not traffic paths go through an area is important for the same resons that boundaries themselves are important. If children are passing through an area where other children are working, they are more likely to be distracted from their work or play. Eliminating traffic through an area limits distractions.

6. MATERIALS: Are materials normally stored in the area?

This is one of the issues discussed in Chapter 1. It simply asks whether there are materials stored in the area. In this instance, we are concerned with materials that children use rather than materials that only you or other adults use.

Whether materials are stored in the area has many implications for the functioning of the area and of the classroom in general. If materials are stored in the area, then it means that children will be going into the area to get materials. This could cause disruption to others working or playing in the area. If the materials are stored in the area and used there as well, then disruption will be minimized. In the multicultural classroom the materials in the area should also be representative of different

cultures. In particular, they should be related to the ethnic backgrounds of the children in the classroom.

7. MATERIALS: Are materials stored in such a way that children are able to return them to their proper place?

This question asks whether there are specific places for materials so that children can return them to their original sites. The question also involves determining whether the task of returning the materials is a reasonable one for the children to carry out. For example, if young children are always expected to put crayons back in the box so there is a complete set with one of each color in the set, it is unlikely that children will, in fact, return them to their original place (especially if more than one set of crayons is out at the same time).

If children are able to return materials to their proper place, then it is more likely that other children will know where to find what they are looking for. You know how difficult it is to work in your kitchen or shop if someone uses it but does not put things back where you're used to finding them. The same principle applies in the classroom as well.

8. MATERIALS: If materials are stored in the area, are they visually evident to the children?

This question asks whether the children can see most of the stored materials they are allowed to use. For example, if books

are stored in the area, are they on the shelves or are they in closed cupboards?

Storing materials so that the children can see them makes it much easier for them to find what they are looking for and to "browse" for other materials. For example, let's say you are hungry and want a snack. You don't know what you want but you look in the refrigerator. There you see something appealing and you've got your snack. This kind of process accounts for a good portion of how we think and solve problems. The young child is even more dependent than the adult upon what he can directly see and experience. For this reason it is important to provide multicultural materials which are readily available and visible.

9. MATERIALS: If materials are stored in the area, are they stored in such a way that they are physically available to the children?

Like the item above, this questions refers to instances in which materials are stored or normally found in the area. The question is whether the majority of these materials are physically available to the child. This means that materials are not in places requiring an adult to retrieve them (e.g., high shelves, locked cupboards), nor restricted by rules such as "Do not use without teacher permission."

A learning center cannot function as such unless children have access to materials. If they don't have this access, then they can do only what you or other adults consciously provide for, and not what their own creative processes suggest. Recall that we want to help children become decision-makers about what they will do, and how they will do it. This involves decisions about

what resources or materials to use.

10. FUNCTION: Does the area have a specific function that is evident to the children?

This question asks whether there are specific types of activities that are always done in the area and whether this idea is clear to the children. The function of an area may be made clear to children through a written or pictorial sign, through materials, through child products, or through habits and practices in the classroom.

The whole idea of a learning center is that it is a specific place set up for children to do specific things. Ideally, what is done there should share some common characteristics such as the materials used, the kind of working facilities that support the activity, and whether a small-group setting is the best place for the activity to occur. In general, if some areas in the room are set up for specific functions or activities, then children know what to do when they go there and they know where to go for specific activities as well as specific materials.

11. MATERIALS AND FUNCTION: Are materials related to the function of the area also stored in the area?

This question asks whether there are materials stored in the area that relate to the type of activities pursued in the area (e.g., if the area is a "math" area, are math materials also stored there?).

As we've already suggested, a learning center should have

materials that are used there. This cuts down on general traffic to and from storage areas and helps children find materials that help in their activities. (See item number six above).

12. PRODUCTS: Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area visually evident to the children working in the area?

This question concerns products from past activities in which children have been involved and whether such products are present and visually evident in the area.

This issue is important for two psychological reasons. First, if products that the children themselves have made are present in the area, their presence increases the children's sense of "belonging," "importance," and "pride" in the classroom. Secondly, past products can act as resources or sources for new ideas. If children can interact with their own "record," that interaction will contribute to the richness of their activities in the present.

For the multicultural classroom, the issue of individual child products is also equally important. Further, the products may include those contributed by parents and other members of different cultures.

CHAPTER 3

MAKING THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM WORK FOR YOU: IMAGINARY CASE STUDIES

Introduction

In this chapter we will look at some examples of specific curricular activities and the ways two imaginary teachers arranged their classroom to suit these activities.

This chapter is written with three thoughts in mind. First, by using a classroom as an illustrative example (even though it is an imaginary one), you will have a better idea of what each of the six primary areas can look like when set up for specific activities. Second, you will be introduced to a number of practical concerns about behavior associated with classroom activities. The activities will serve as examples of some general concerns. Third, by considering both the concerns of our two teachers and the ways they arranged their room, you will be introduced to a number of principles or techniques for bringing about desired behavior or solving certain classroom management problems such as: the distribution of materials, having children return materials to their proper place, maintaining the desired number of children within areas, maintaining a tolerable noise level, reducing disruptive traffic, and eliminating general causes of classroom distractions.

In this chapter, there are a number of short "thinking activities" that will not require field observation. After each activity there will be a short "follow-up" giving our suggested answers to the problems you thought about in the activity. At the end of these

"mini-activities," there is a final short follow-up that summarizes the main points of the mini-activities.

Overview of Activities

Each of the activities in this chapter is organized into four parts. The first part is a statement by "Ms. Jones" and "Ms. Smith" that describes the activity they want to set up and their concerns for behavior associated with the activity. The second part is an illustration of what Jones and Smith actually did. The illustration is accompanied by a written description. The third part is a list of questions that you should answer. You can use the illustration and written description plus your own knowledge when you answer the question. The fourth part is the follow-up that provides the answers we would give to the questions. In general, it will take approximately an hour and a half to two hours to complete the activities.

Instructions for Activities

After reading the background information, begin with ACTIVITY III-A. below. Your task will be to read about what Ms. Smith and Jones want to accomplish, look at the illustration and read the description of the area, and then answer the questions. After answering the questions on your own, you may look at our answers found in the FOLLOW-UP TO ACTIVITY III-A. Then go on to ACTIVITY III-B and continue the same cycle until you reach the end of the chapter.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

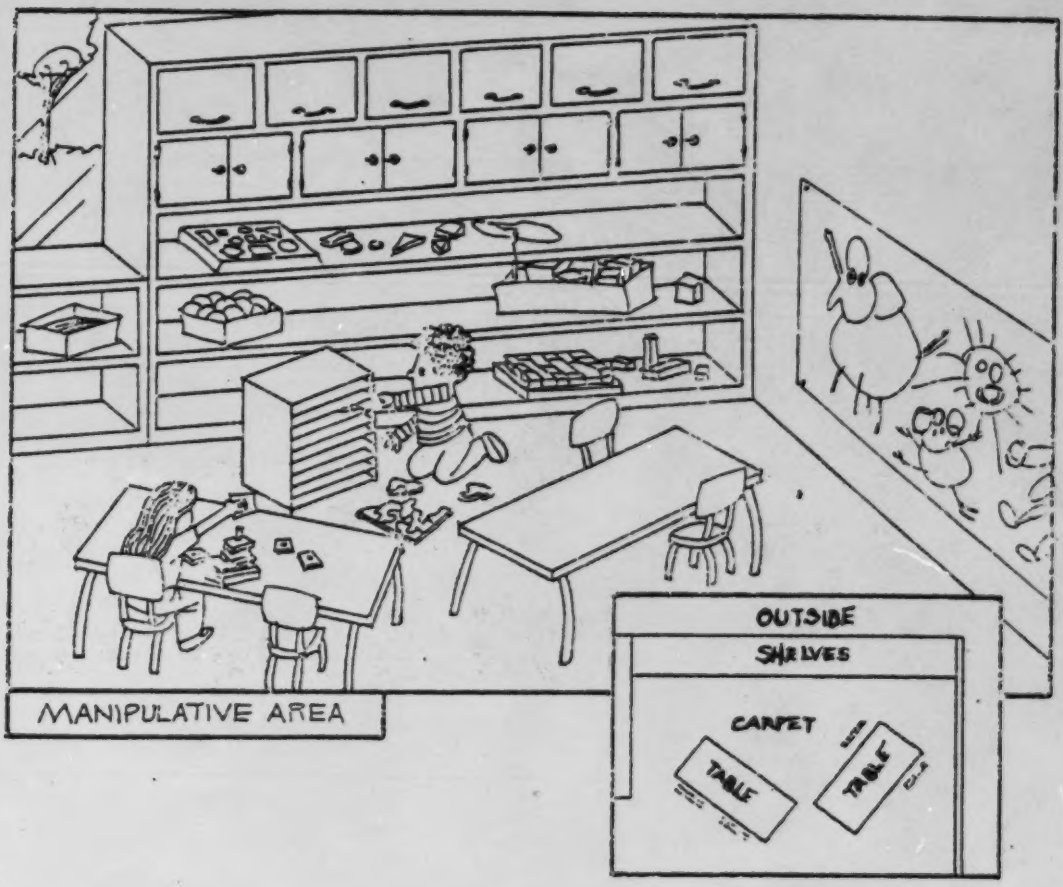
Here's a little information on the two teachers. Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith work together in a classroom of 20 preschool children. This is the first "school" experience for these children. The teachers work with two classes of children each day: one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Both classes last for two and a half hours. There is very limited outdoor area for the children to play in, so the children spend all of their class period indoors except on special occasions.

Activity III-A

READ THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION AND LOOK AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION. ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

Ms. Smith and Jones would like a permanent area where a small number of children could work with manipulatives. They want a working surface for sitting work since many of the materials will be easier to handle on a solid surface at sitting height. They also want the children to be able to play on the floor yet close enough so that the materials need not be transported across the room. They want the area to be such that there is not a great deal of traffic going through the area, and such that the noise associated with manipulatives will not distract others. Since most of the manipulatives can be used by children on their own, they want the materials to be accessible (physically and visually) to the children and arranged so that children can put materials back where they belong. They also want the accessible materials to include those from a variety of different cultures.

Illustration for ACTIVITY III-A



Description of the Area

Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones used a carpeted corner of the classroom to set up an area for manipulatives. Along the wall there are low shelves on which materials are placed. There is closed storage space above the shelves. Two child-height tables, at angles to each other, serve to enclose a center space where children can play on the floor. They worked with the parents to collect and provide toys and games from different cultures.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How did the teachers arrange for play on the floor and still have working surfaces for sitting-work in the area?

2. How is the area arranged to eliminate or reduce traffic through the area?

3. How have the teachers reduced the noise made in the area or made it less disturbing to others in the classroom?

4. How are materials stored in the area so that children can find what they need and put items back where they came from?

5. Where did they obtain materials from different cultures?

Follow-Up to Activity III-A

1. How did the teachers arrange for play on the floor and still have work surfaces for sitting work in the area?

   Two child-height tables provide solid working surfaces at which children can either sit or stand. The two tables are arranged so that they enclose an area which is boarded on one side by the storage cabinet. This enclosed space allows children to play on the floor without being exposed to classroom traffic. The floor is carpeted so that children can be comfortable while playing on the floor.

2. How is the area arranged to eliminate or reduce traffic through the area?

   When the area is placed in a corner of the room, traffic has already been reduced. Although the children sitting at the tables are not completely protected from classroom traffic, they are not exposed to the main traffic paths. The children playing on the floor in the center of the area are protected from all traffic except when other children go to the materials. But even this traffic has been reduced by having some of the children sit along the edge of the tables; thus their route to the materials does not go through the center of the area.

3. How have the teachers reduced the noise made in the area or made it less disturbing to others in the classroom?

   Noise has been reduced by putting carpet on the floor and by

making the area small enough so that a large group of children is unlikely to collect there.

4. How are materials stored in the area so that children can find what they need and put items back where they came from?

   All materials are stored in one set of shelves set at a child's height. Keeping all the materials in one place helps children return them. The open shelves allow children to select what they want. The amount of materials exposed at any time is kept reasonably modest so that children are not overwhelmed by the number of choices and are able to see clearly all available materials. There is storage space above the shelves where the teacher keeps other materials she wants to put out at another time.

5. Where did they obtain multicultural materials?

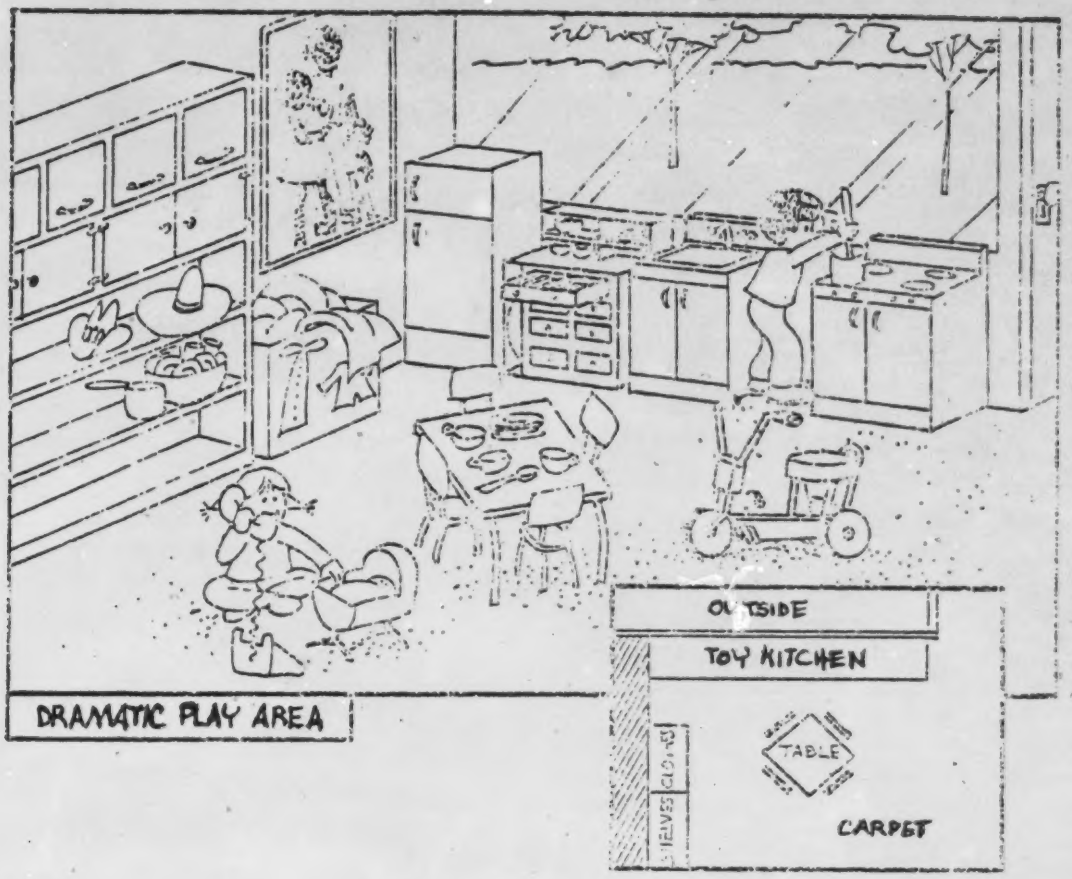
   The primary source of materials related to the cultures of children in the classroom were the parents and community members of that culture. Additional resources were the libraries and resource centers such as the General Assistance Centers and the bilingual sections of school distrct resource centers.

Activity III-B

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE RELATED QUESTIONS : AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Ms. Jones and Smith would like a permanent area where children can engage in dramatic play. For the next two weeks they want the play to revolve around family roles, e.g., mother-father, daughter-son, brother-sister. They'd like the children to have easy access to a wide range of multicultural props for imitative play, but they also want the props stored so that the children will put them back where they belong. They want the area arranged so that there is no traffic going through the area; they are also concerned that the noise made in the area may disturb other children. They feel that in this kind of play ("house play") children should have the opportunity to "build their own house" so they want the area to provide opportunities for this activity.

Illustration for Activity IV-D



Description of the Area

A carpeted corner of the classroom was selected as a location to set up a dramatic play area. The area is supplied with a toy kitchen set including a sink, stove and refrigerator, as well as storage for eating and cooking utensils. Storage cabinets similar to those used in the manipulative play area are also provided in the dramatic play area. On the lower shelves are multicultural props and materials that the children might use in play revolving around family roles. Other materials that could be used in other dramatic play themes are stored above the shelves.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How will the children know where to return the multicultural props or materials when they finish playing with them?

2. How did the teacher limit the traffic going through the area?

3. What was done to insure that the noise made by children playing in the area would not distract others?

4. Next to what other area might you locate the play area in order to provide "house building" opportunities in the area?

1. How will the children know where to return the multicultural props or materials when they finish playing with them?

   The children need to know the function of props before they can determine where they should be stored. This knowledge will be provided by the children who are familiar with particular cultural artifacts (i.e., how to use chopsticks).

   Some of the props (e.g., eating and cooking utensils) are stored in specific areas similar to those where these items are found in many (but not all) homes. For example, tableware is kept in the tableware drawer and pots and pans are stored under the stove. In general, the children know that all the dramatic-play materials belong at this center, either on the open shelves or in specific storage spaces (as in the case of tableware). Loose items of clothing and costumes are stored in a big box labeled with pictures of various types of clothing.

2. How did the teachers limit the traffic going through the area?

   Locating the area in the corner of the room keeps it out of a main traffic flow. However, the area is still subject to traffic in that children may walk in and out of the area with no restrictions and go through the area while moving about the room.

3. What was done to insure that the noise made by children playing in the area would not distract others?

   You can't insure that others won't be distracted, but you can make distraction less likely by carpeting the area, by reducing the number of children in the area at any one time, and by reminding children to "keep the volume down" when others are being disturbed.

4. Next to what other area might you locate the play area in order to provide "house building" opportunities in the area?

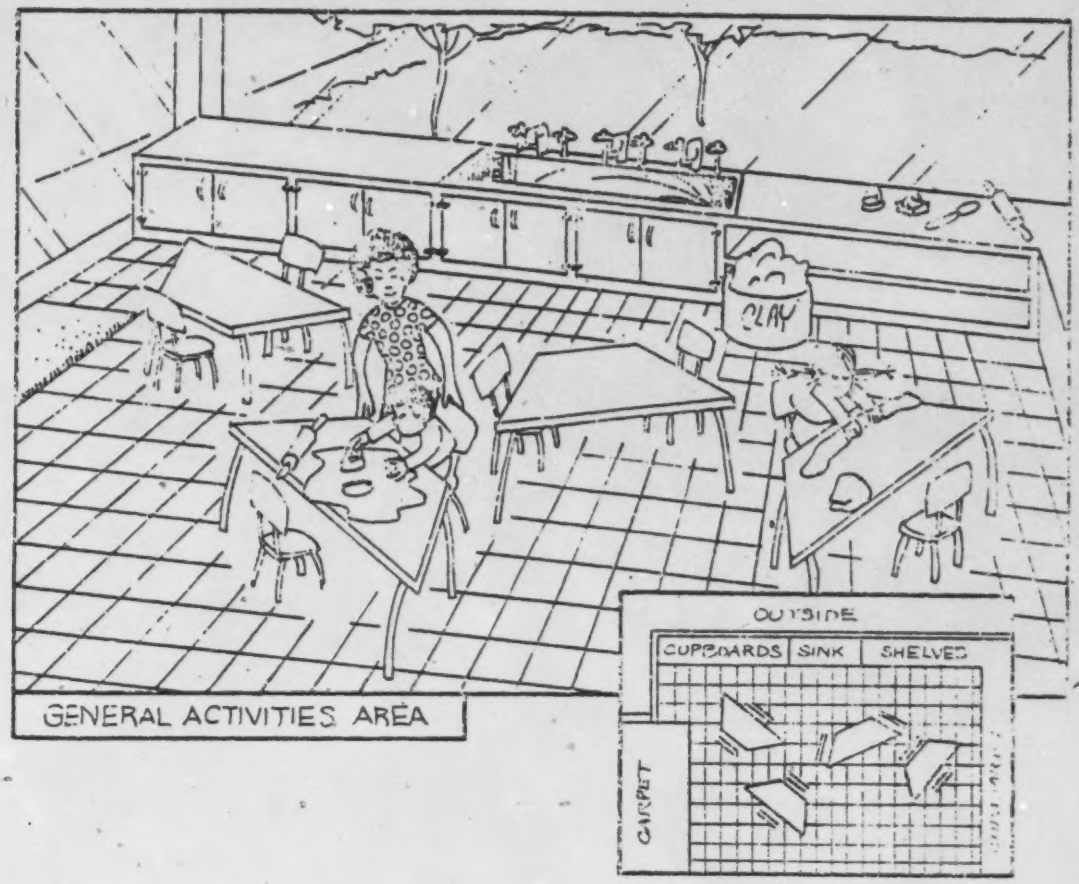
In this instance, the dramatic-play area has been located next to the block area. There is free access between the two areas so that they can merge together and complement each other. Children in the dramatic-play area can use blocks for "house building" activities.

Activity III-C

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE RELATED QUESTIONS .. AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Once a week, Ms. Jones and Smith set up an area for play with ceramic clay. This week they want the children to explore various shapes while playing with the clay. They want the area close to a water supply where children can wash. They also want the area to be arranged so that the mess associated with clay will not damage the floor. Since the activity is popular but is offered only once a week, they want the area to be large enough to support eight children. But they also want to arrange the area so that the children are somewhat separated, in order to keep them from interfering with one another's activities. They also want to provide hard surfaces so children can pound and work the clay. They think there ought to be an area where children can dry their products. Further, they want to provide examples from the clay products of many cultures.

Illustration for Activity C



Description of the Area

This is a large area with tiled floor. There are four tables that can be put together to form a larger surface. In this instance, the tables are separated. The area has a large sink, storage cabinets, low open shelves, and child-height counters. This area can be used for many purposes, but is now set up for play with clay. They have made and displayed borrowed ceramic containers from parents and pictures from the library of clay products of other cultures.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA.

1. How did the teachers provide room for eight children, but keep them somewhat separated?

2. How is the floor protected from the messy clay?

3. Where would the children dry their ceramic products?

4. How did they provide multicultural examples?

Follow-Up to Activity III-C

1. How did the teachers provide room for eight children, but keep them somewhat separated?

   Rather than allow all the children to work at one large table, Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones provided four smaller tables with two chairs each. That way the children were somewhat separated.

2. How is the floor protected from the messy clay?

   The floor is tiled, thus making easy clean-up feasible.

3. Where would the children dry their ceramic products?

   Low shelves covered with sheets of cardboard serve as a drying place for clay constructions.

4. How did they provide multicultural examples?

   They talked with parents and arranged for the loan of pottery, china and ceramic pieces. They included clay products which were functional (e.g. water jars) as well as art pieces (e.g., sculpture). They also worked with librarians and local museums to obtain pictures, books and other display materials.

Follow-Up to Activities A Through C: General Solutions ...

ACTIVITIES A Through C involved a number of common problems a teacher must consider when arranging classroom areas. Here's a list of some of these concerns and some suggested means of meeting them.

HOW CAN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN AN AREA BE LIMITED TO THE DESIRED NUMBER?

* Size of the area:

  One way to limit the number of children is to arrange the area so that only the desired number of children can occupy it.

* The number of seating or working spaces:

  A related way of limiting the number is to restrict the number of sitting spaces or the amount of working space.

* The amount of materials put out:

  By controlling the number or amount of materials put out in an area, the teacher can limit the number of children using the area.

* Relating areas to children's interests:

  If a number of areas in the room will attract children, then the number of children going to any one area will be limited.

* Classroom rules:

  By establishing classroom rules, the teacher can restrict the number of children going into an area.

HOW CAN THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC IN THE ROOM BE DIRECTED SO THAT IT WON'T DISTURB OTHER CHILDREN?

* Location of materials:

  Materials can be stored in such a way as to minimize the amount of movement required to retrieve the materials.

* Arrangement of areas:

  Areas can be arranged so there is a common entrance and exit, thereby eliminating traffic through the area.

* Location of working spaces:

  Locate working spaces (such as seating) so that only a limited number of children will be disturbed as others are coming into the area, going out, or getting supplies.

* Location of the area:

  The area can be located away from main traffic patterns such as main entrance and exits, paths to the sink or bathroom, etc.

HOW DO YOU REDUCE THE NOISE IN AN AREA TO KEEP IT FROM DISTRACTING OTHERS?

* Limit the number of children engaged in a noisy activity.
* Put noisy activities on carpets that help to absorb the sound.
* Separate noisy activities from quiet ones (e.g., locate reading and block play in separate areas of the room).
* Provide solid physical partitions between some of the areas to baffle the noise.

HOW DO YOU CUT DOWN DISTRACTIONS IN AN OPEN CLASSROOM?

This question is a critical one that concerns many prospective or seasoned teachers who are new to an "open classroom." Most of the issues discussed so far relate to this problem. Let's review them.

* Traffic: If you cut down the amount of traffic in the room or the amount of movement from one area to another, or arrange the room so that traffic does not disrupt children, you will find that you are at the same time eliminating classroom distractions.
* Noise: By cutting down the amount of noise made in areas or in the classroom in general, you will cut down classroom distraction.
* Boredom: If you provide an interesting and stimulating choice of activities, children will be less likely to engage in distracting activities.
* Visual distraction: If your areas are visually isolated from each other, you will reduce distraction by reducing

HOW CAN MATERIALS BE STORED SO THAT THEY ARE VISUALLY AND PHYSICALLY ACCESSIBLE?

* Put materials on open shelves or in containers on the floor.
* Keep materials at child height.
* If materials are out of view, such as in cupboards, put pictures or examples of the materials on the outside of the containers.
* Don't stack materials so that they hide each other.
* Limit the amount of materials displayed in the room so that children can easily find what they want.

HOW CAN MATERIALS BE STORED SO THAT THE CHILDREN CAN PUT THEM BACK WHERE THEY BELONG?

* Don't make the task physically or intellectually too difficult (e.g., putting materials like crayons, or cuisenaire rods, back together in complete sets).
* If objects must be sorted, make the basis of sorting simple (e.g., by color, shape, etc.).
* Provide containers into which children can return objects.
* Put outlines of objects on shelves or put examples of the objects where they are supposed to be returned.
* Limit the amount of materials in the area to a reasonable quantity.

the degree to which activities in one area attract the attention of children in another area.

* Number of children together: If the number of children working together is kept at a reasonable level, there will be fewer distractions because there will be less large-group interaction.

* Comfort: If areas are made comfortable and are well suited to the activity of the area, children will be less likely to become restless and distractive.

* Self-direction in activities: The more children can become self-directed in their activities, and the more you can help them become so, the less likely they are to distract others.

* Meeting needs for privacy: If children who want to be alone can find a place where they will have some privacy, they are less likely to become disruptive.

HOW CAN YOU ADD A MULTICULTURAL DIMENSION TO THE CLASSROOM?
(Use this page to write in your ideas).

CHAPTER 4

A PLAN FOR CHANGE

Introduction

In this chapter, we will put the previous chapters into a focus for action. In the first chapter, you observed a classroom to determine whether or not all six primary areas were present and, if not, what changes would have to be made so that at least one of each of the six areas would be evident in the classroom. In Chapter 2, you also made a classroom observation, this time evaluating one of its learning centers and suggesting what changes, if any, would have to be made so that the classroom had at least one learning center that corresponded to our description of a multicultural learning center. In Chapter 3, you completed some thinking tasks where you considered how a teacher might meet her own needs through the arrangement of the classroom.

All these activities and their related discussions have been designed to lead ultimately to one outcome, the improvement of preschool and primary classrooms. If this effort in which you shared does not result in better classrooms, then we have failed in our responsibility. By "better," we, of course, mean classrooms that better serve the actual needs of you and your children. It is time, then, to consider an actual classroom and what you would do to improve it. In this chapter, you will develop plans for changing a classroom into a multicultural classroom.

You may, at present, be working in a classroom and have the authority actually to change some aspects of the classroom arrangement. Or you may work in a classroom yet not have that authority. If the former describes your

situation, then your task is relatively straightforward. You need to consider what changes you'd like and what changes are feasible, and then make the changes that are both desired and possible. However, if you do not have the authority to make changes, you are faced with an additional problem, that of convincing others of the reasonableness of your suggestions.

We cannot here resolve this latter problem for you because situations vary widely from one place to another. But we believe that if you have acquired the skills that this unit is designed to promote, you should be in a position of strength in presenting your case to others.

If you are clear about what changes you feel would contribute to a smoother, more efficiently functioning multicultural classroom, and if you are clear about how you would make these changes, as well as their feasibility, you have a good chance of winning the cooperative participation of others.

On the other hand, you may not yet be working in a classroom situation. If this is the case, you are not now in a position to make changes. However, most likely you will have the opportunity at some point in your career. If you participate earnestly in the activities of this chapter, you will be better prepared when that day comes.

Instructions for Activity I

Change is often easiest to accomplish when small steps are taken. This is particularly true when the change involves putting new skills into practice. Accordingly, ACTIVITY IV will focus on one change that you would make rather than on a number of changes.

This activity involves four steps. First, you should observe the classroom and evaluate the learning centers in the classroom shown in Form X-1. This step is basically the same as **Form D**, with the difference that before, you observed only one learning center, and here you will evaluate most of the

learning centers in the classroom. Secondly, you must study your results in Form X-1 and make a decision about what kind of changes you wish to make in one learning area.

The final step of ACTIVITY IV is to use Form X-2 to describe the particular change, the reasons for the change and how you plan to go about making such a change.

FORM X-1

CLASSROOM AREAS	MATERIALS (Check if any present)				
	Asian	Black	Native Am.	Spanish Sp.	Other
Arts & Crafts					
Dramatic Play					
Music					
Reading					
Manipulatives					
Mathematics					
Movement/Dance					
Water & Sand Play					

Name: _____

Date: _____

FORM X-2 - Planned Classroom Change

1. I would make the following change(s)

2. The reason for my decision is:

3. My plan for making this change is:

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity IV

We will not go into a lengthy discussion in this follow-up ACTIVITY IV. The important point is that, except under very unusual circumstances, you should have been able to find at least one important way in which an area should be changed. In addition, you should by now be in a position to provide well-thought-out reasons not only for why you would make changes, but also for the nature of changes that you would make.

The first two parts of ACTIVITY IV were designed to help you focus your attention on multicultural quality of the learning centers. The information gathered in these activities should have helped you make your decisions for changing the classroom. Of course, just looking at the physical characteristics of the classroom is not a completely sufficient basis for making the kinds of decisions required in ACTIVITY IV. You also need to consider the actual behavior of the children, the nature of the curricular activities, and how you want the classroom to function. This unit is not designed to help you determine your teaching objectives. However, it is designed to help you achieve an optimal arrangement of the physical environment so that you stand a better chance of meeting your teaching objectives.

In ending this chapter, we should re-emphasize the point that ACTIVITY IV is only a beginning step in contemplating changes in your classroom. We limited ACTIVITY IV to a focus on one classroom change because we feel that, by limiting your focus, we would make it easier for you to deal with the problem. But you should not lose sight of the goal of always being ready to make changes in the physical classroom facility as those changes are warranted. It is almost certain that as you grow in your teaching skills, you will become more familiar with the classroom and its operation. And as your children grow, change will be in order.